

FR°GM°RT°N CULPEPPER SAVES THE W°RLD

Keith Trezise

CHAPTER ONE

The Environmental Technology Department's
Most Menial Employee



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About the book and the author

FROGMORTON CULPEPPER SAVES THE WORLD

Frogmorton Culpepper didn't wake up on the day he got fired expecting to save the world, not that week at least. He had to prove out his environmental technology experiments to his superiors first. The world had yet to provide any recognition of his genius. His mother had yet to provide any recognition of his ability to do anything. The girl of his dreams had yet to provide any recognition of his existence. Some, if not all, of that changes in *Frogmorton Culpepper Saves the World*, a work of the scientifically fictitious that if it doesn't change your life forever, will at least make you smile (a lot) and if you want to know why there's a picture of a cleverly-folder origami rhinoceros on the cover, all we can say is that you'll have to read the book.

KEITH TREZISE

Keith Trezise lives in Warwickshire, England and amongst other things is a playwright and entertainer. His plays have been performed worldwide, with his one act play *Duplex* winning a Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain award. He has been a member of a number of bands and is currently performing with his one-man show as a guitarist and vocalist. *Frogmorton Culpepper Saves the World* is his first novel.

CHAPTER ONE

The Environmental Technology Department's Most Menial Employee

For most of his thirty-two years, four months and seventeen days Frogmorton Culpepper had known space was big. After all, he'd read *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* seven times, and whilst he was sure that most of the rest of it was made up, he was sure the bit about space being big, really big, was true. But he'd been thinking about space and its size a lot recently, and was thinking about it now as he lay flat on his back on the floor of his living room. He turned to Chloe, who was laying on the floor next to him, and said, 'Space is big.'

The news was no big deal to Chloe. She took it all in her stride. Space might well be big, but she had much more important things on her mind.

It might be worth mentioning that Chloe did not have much of an idea about the concept of space. Indeed, the subject rarely bothered her at all. Chloe only ever thought about two things - eating and sleeping. A boring trait in a woman, that is agreed, but nobody ever said that Chloe was a woman, did they? In fact, Chloe was Frogmorton's cat.

'Space is big,' Frogmorton repeated, in case Chloe had missed the enormity of the statement the first time around.

Chloe responded by stretching her paws out in front of her and, giving a huge yawn, curled up into a fluffy ball and went to sleep.

Frogmorton sprang to his feet and ran across to the window, which he flung open. He stuck his head out and gazed up to the heavens to make sure he hadn't been mistaken. The sudden movement was too much for Chloe, and, thinking at least a hurricane was about to strike, she dived for cover under the couch.

‘See, it must be big,’ he mused, ‘otherwise you would be able to see the other end of it.’

‘He’s not still going on about space,’ thought Chloe. Just because she had no concept of space didn’t mean that she couldn’t have an opinion. Many successful politicians have forged their careers using that principle.

‘I mean, it would take an enormous amount of time to get all the way across it,’ Frogmorton continued.

Chloe was getting rather fed up with all this talk about space, and took the opportunity to leave the room whilst her master was contemplating the cosmic navel.

Frogmorton stared up at the stars dancing motionlessly above him. He scoured the sky and found the Great Bear. That was easy to recognise. Then his eyes darted from constellation to constellation. There was Hydra. There was Leo. And Orion the great hunter. He singled out each of them in turn, calling their names out loudly in triumphant recognition, all the time gasping at the awesome spectacle above him. It was a pity he hadn’t got a clue about astronomy and hadn’t identified one constellation correctly. But he was keen and enthusiastic, and that must count for something in the great scheme of things.

It was being keen and enthusiastic that got Frogmorton his job. He worked at Dawson University in the Environmental Technology Department. Oh, sure, it sounds pretty impressive, but the truth of the matter was that Frogmorton was nothing more than a laboratory assistant, which in effect meant he was little more than a janitor sweeping up the mess left over when the scientists had finished a project and were satisfied (or not) with the results.

He had written to the Head of Department, shortly before receiving his exam results from school, saying how much he loved the environment and how he wanted to work towards a better place for future generations to live. The Head of Department wrote back and told him that if he obtained good grades in his exams, he could

be considered. However, the results were not quite what Frogmorton was expecting and the Head of Department turned him down. Undaunted, Frogmorton wrote relentlessly to the Head of Department saying that he would take any job offered in order to work with the environment and, eventually, his persistence paid off and he was given the job he has now - mostly because the Head of Department was fed up with all the letters and certainly not because of any aptitude Frogmorton may have had towards working with the environment. Nevertheless, Frogmorton felt that he was contributing to the salvation of the planet and it made him feel good. Besides, he didn't intend being a laboratory assistant for the rest of his life, and was taking an Open University degree in order to gain promotion. With a degree he felt he could really make a difference. People might start to take notice of him. He would be able to communicate his ideas to the world - make people aware that they had it in their own hands to stop the rot that was gradually taking over and destroying the planet.

The following morning was going to be the starting point of his future career. The following morning he was going to get the results of his Open University degree course. The following morning he was going to ask the Head of Department for a real job in the Environmental Technology Department.

He had already been working on a project in the Environmental Technology Laboratory with the, albeit reluctant, permission of the Head of Department. It formed part of his course. It was not a set project; it was an idea of his own and he was very excited about it indeed. He called it 'Project Earth' and he was aiming to show how the greenhouse effect could be reversed and how the ozone layer could be replenished.

Frogmorton was starting to feel dizzy looking up to the heavens. He sighed at the incomprehensible vastness of it all and said, with a smug feeling of total comprehension, 'Space is bloody big.'

* * *

Of course, Frogmorton was quite correct. Space is a pretty large chunk of real estate with plenty of room to build an extension. You don't get a lot of noise from the neighbours either. As a matter of fact, you hardly ever see them. But his last statement was not quite as accurate as it might, at first glance, appear. You have probably heard the argument that space is relative and, I dare say, it is. Who are we to doubt the words of scientists? But do any of us really know what it is relative to?

'Time!' I hear you all shout in unison. Well, that's a pretty vague statement. It's as if we are all programmed to respond to the question 'What is space relative to?' by shouting out 'Time!' like a bunch of demented parrots. The fact is that 'time' is a word landlords use when they want to close the bar and send everyone home so that they, the landlords and their chosen few, can start the serious business of after-hours-drinking. Time is a device bosses use to measure how effectively employees are performing their jobs - or not, as the case may be. Time is a man-made thing. It's our way of measuring the passing of day to night and season to season. I don't doubt that those things are relative to space, but hours and minutes are synthetic. They don't really exist outside the ticking of someone's watch - but I digress. As I have said, space is relative. We don't have to know precisely what to. Let's just accept the wisdom of science.

So Frogmorton's claim as to the size of space was a bit rash. He didn't qualify his statement and, therefore, it was a little flawed.

Of course, if you're sitting in a space capsule hurtling towards the moon at God knows what speed, knowing that a decimal point in the wrong place in your trajectory could make you miss your target by several thousand miles, space is, indeed, very big.

If, on the other hand, you are trying to thread a needle, you will notice that the space through which you are trying to push the thread is not that big at all and that a decimal point in the wrong place in

your trajectory could make you miss your target by several thousand miles. Or, at least, that's how it seems.

It is thought in some circles that contemplating the size of the Universe - which includes quite a bit of space, I understand - can send people mad. I cannot fully agree with this theory as I personally used to think about the vastness of the Cosmos quite often as a youth.

* * *

Frogmorton pulled his head back inside. He could not see very far in the night sky and was straining his eyes. (Although, it could be argued that, because some of the stars Frogmorton had been looking at were several hundred light years away, he could actually see very far in the night sky.) He noticed that Chloe had left the room. She always seemed to do that when he wanted to have a chat with her. It was as if she sensed that he had something he wanted to get off his chest, and so she would run off and find a hiding place until he had forgotten what it was he wanted to say to her. She could be very selfish at times.

The only other person he could talk to was his mother, but she wasn't interested in any of the things he was. The only thing she seemed concerned about was finding Frogmorton a wife. If she was so interested in seeing him married, what the hell did she give him a name like Frogmorton for?

He had asked her about that many times, but she would never tell him. It remained one of the great untold secrets of the Universe.

He thought that, maybe, he was named after one of his grandfathers, but research showed him that that was not the case. Frogmorton, indeed! What a ribbing he used to get at school. He imagined, perhaps, that the name might have been some fantastically hilarious joke his mother was playing on his father, but dismissed that idea, because his mother was devoid of a sense of humour. However,

no matter how he came by the name, he was stuck with it. Everyone knew him by that name so there was no point changing it now, not after thirty-two years, four months and seventeen days.

He always believed that he suited his name, though. Especially the 'Frog' bit. Mind you, at times, he felt the 'mort' bit to be quite reflective of not only the way he felt, but also his social life. It was not easy, being a spotty spectacle wearer, to attract females in his youth and, although now his spots had long disappeared, so had his self-confidence. Consequently, he still felt ill at ease with girls.

Whenever his mother described him to an eligible young lady, she would always highlight his strong points, which didn't usually take her many minutes to do. If he only thought about it more, though, he could make himself quite presentable.

Frogmorton closed the window and drew the curtains. It was late and he had a busy schedule ahead of him the following day. He walked through to the kitchen to make himself a bedtime drink, and there was confronted by his nemesis.

His mother sat at the kitchen table, a picture of refinement with her legs up on the table picking dead skin from between her toes.

'Mum! Do you have to do that?' he pleaded.

'Are you going to do it for me?' she asked. Quite a relevant question really.

'But do you have to do it on the kitchen table? We have to eat off there.'

'Oh, and so you expect your poor mother to bend down and reach her toes now! You know what my back's like.'

'Mum, there is nothing wrong with your back.'

'No, I know. And that's because I don't go around bending over to touch my toes all the time. I look after my body, I do. You ought to do the same. It's no wonder you're not married, the way you neglect your body.'

'I do not neglect my body.'

'Well why aren't you married by now then? I was married with

five kids by the time I was your age.’

‘No you weren’t. I’m an only child.’

‘No thanks to your father. He was always after it, he was. Dirty old sod! If I’d given in to him every time he wanted a bit, I’d probably have had a dozen kids.’

‘Do you mind putting your feet away, Mum? I want to get myself a bit of supper before I go on up to bed.’

His mother did mind, but grudgingly put away the offending appendages and went off to bed, all the time mumbling about what a randy devil Frogmorton’s father was and how she couldn’t even do whatever she liked in her own kitchen any more. Staring at the retreating figure of his overbearing mother made Frogmorton realise that marriage would not be a bad option after all.

He went to the cupboard to get the cocoa and found only an empty tin, so decided to settle for hot milk. As he made his way to the microwave with his mug of milk, Chloe decided to return home with some supper of her own and darted through the cat flap at just the right moment to send Frogmorton sprawling across the kitchen floor. Amazingly he managed not to spill a drop of milk and, as he lay there on his stomach, Chloe proudly laid her offering about half an inch from the end of his nose. It was a mouse.

Chloe was a strange creature. She very much enjoyed the hunt. Her instincts were in perfect working order. She would stalk her prey with great patience, and would pounce at just the right moment. She would spend the required amount of time toying with her catch, but then, perhaps because of being pampered by her human companions so much, she would not eat her quarry unless it was hot. She wanted her meat cooked - albeit done rare. In order not to keep Chloe waiting too long, Frogmorton usually microwaved her little titbits. Three minutes on full power for a mouse or vole, four minutes for a rat or small bird and ten minutes for the likes of the occasional seagull.

He picked the dead creature up by its tail and headed for the

microwave. He opened the door of the appliance and put his mug of milk inside, closed the door and set the timer for one minute. Oh, don't worry about hygiene. Frogmorton had a second microwave just for Chloe, and he didn't even keep it in the kitchen. In fact, it was hidden out of sight behind the television cabinet in the living room. A series of beeps gently reminded Frogmorton that his bedtime drink was now warm and he retrieved it from the microwave, and took it and the mouse through to the living room. Chloe was frantically rubbing around his legs as he passed between the two rooms, and it was a miracle that he didn't end up on the floor in a heap again. Frogmorton placed his mug on the coffee table and went behind the television cabinet to cook Chloe's supper. As he bent down to open the door of Chloe's microwave, he noticed a peculiar purple light emanating from within. He pressed his nose up against the glass door to observe this phenomenon more closely and could hardly believe his eyes. Standing there inside Chloe's microwave was a four-inch-tall humanoid figure bathed in a purple glow. Chloe arched her back and spat, narrowly missing Frogmorton's face, which he had turned towards her as if to ask her for confirmation of that which he had just witnessed. He looked back at the microwave. There was no glow this time. Everything appeared normal. Frogmorton tossed the mouse inside and set the timer to three minutes. He thought he had better get off to bed - he must have been more tired than he felt.

* * *

Isn't fate funny? Things invariably happen either when we least expect them or when we've turned our backs or left the room just for a couple of seconds. Like when your favourite football team is playing a televised live match and you have to leave the room half way through the first half because of an urgent call of nature. You can bet your bottom dollar that the moment you leave that room the deadlock will be broken by one or other of the teams sinking the ball

into the back of the net. And when you're out and about on holiday, for instance, you know that the moment your battery goes dead in your camera, Elvis Presley will walk by hand in hand with Lord Lucan.

Such a case of peculiarly bad timing occurred at NASA's SETI installation at Ames Research Center near Palo Alto, California. For the briefest of moments the instruments picked up a particularly strong and localised signal. Further investigations would have revealed that the signal had been aimed at somewhere in the UK. However, at precisely the same moment Gavin Woosner, the operative on duty at the time, decided to sneeze. It wasn't, of course, a conscious decision and, if he had had the choice, he would probably have preferred not to bother, but the event did distract him from observing the first real contact with extra-terrestrial life this planet would have. He did, of course, notice the incident on the print-out, but, thinking the anomaly was caused by his nasal ejaculation, his reaction was to say, 'Man! When I sneeze, I SNEEZE!', and then he continued to ignore it. If Gavin Woosner had been able to make arrangements to sneeze at a later date, he could have made a name for himself at NASA

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This is the end of Chapter 1. We hope you enjoyed reading it. To read Chapter 2, Life on Erith, and the rest of the story, Frogmorton Culpepper Saves the World is available in paperback and Kindle e-book from Amazon.co.uk and Amazon worldwide. Search 'Frogmorton' in books and you'll find it.



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The Great British Limerick Book

Lewis Williams

Surely it can't be done. But it has been done. For the first time in the history of mankind someone has been dedicated enough and fool enough to write a filthy limerick for every town in the UK which, unlike Leeds or Devizes, doesn't already have a classic filthy limerick to call its own.

From Land's End to John o' Groats, *The Great British Limerick Book* has a filthy limerick for your town, for your uncle's town, for your cousin's husband's ex-wife's town as long as it's in the UK and as long as it isn't one of those few places that are really impossible to find a rhyme for.

There are over 900 limericks in the book. A lot of them are hilarious. Most of them are very funny. All of them are filthy.



The Oxbridge Limerick Book

Lewis Williams

Presenting the very finest in vulgar humour, *The Oxbridge Limerick Book* revives the ancient and noble art of the filthy limerick, injects it with a large dose of twenty-first century humour and applies it to the venerable institutions of Oxford and Cambridge, giving every college in the two universities a filthy limerick to call its own. The results will cause hilarity and provoke outrage, with what is quite possibly the best and most original little book of filthy limericks to be published since 1928.

About the author

Lewis Williams went to Darwin College, Cambridge (for one evening, that is, in 2015 for a dinner he was invited to.) On the other hand, he did genuinely work at Oxford University for a number of years. His ignominious departure from its employ had nothing whatsoever to do with his writing rude limericks concerning the place or its employees. He is the author of *The Great British Limerick Book* and *The Scottish Limerick Book*. He hasn't devoted the whole of his recent past to the art of writing filthy limericks, either. He is also up to over level 400 on Candy Crush.



Child of Winter

T. R. Hitchman

An old woman harbours a painful secret and meets a young man with a dark secret of his own; a narcissistic journalist learns that the camera can tell the truth in more ways than one; and a boy discovers horrors he never imagined when he set out to get in with the cool kids ...

Ten stories of love, loss and disappointment with a dark twist are the product of the imagination of writer, T.R. Hitchman, the new master of modern macabre.

About the author

T.R. Hitchman's first crush was on Christopher Lee. She grew up in love with the eerie stories of Edgar Allan Poe and, as a child of the eighties, was profoundly affected by being allowed to stay up late to watch *Hammer House of Horror* on TV. She has written for The Gothic Society and her acclaimed novella, *The Homecoming*, was published electronically in 2014. It is included here in revised form, along with nine other equally brilliant, dark and twisted tales in her debut story collection, *Child of Winter*.